



## Eleeta Hilderbrand

May 13, 1915 - January 27, 2012

Eleeta Hilderbrand of Albany passed peacefully in her sleep on Jan. 27, 2012. She was born on May 13, 1915, in Unionvale to Edward Morris and Leeta Hewitt Coats, a descendant of early settlers who came to the Oregon Territory by wagon train in 1843. Eleeta spent her childhood learning the self-sufficiency of farm life. In 1923, the family moved to Albany, where her father started a carpentry, construction and floor-refinishing business.

Eleeta was still young during the Great Depression, when being creative, inventive and resourceful was a part of life. Her pioneer grandmother, Mary Jane Hewitt, passed to Eleeta her love of gardening and the outdoors, which she shared throughout her life. As a young woman, Eleeta discovered her love and talent for journalism, working at a local newspaper.

She was the society editor in November 1934 when she married Kenneth Stephen Hilderbrand, and became a farmer's wife. Their early marriage was spent on Kenneth's family homestead in Albany, now Periwinkle Park. Here she became the mother of four boys, Leslie, Orval, Dale and Kenneth Jr. In 1947, Kenneth and Eleeta bought a 385-acre farm near Adair Village, which is still owned by the family.

Eleeta became very involved in cooperative agriculture extension work in the mid-1940s, where she gained social contacts and a practical education. She served on various committees and covered topics useful to farm families, such as sewing, nutrition economics and time management. In 1955, Kenneth and Eleeta's fifth son, Douglas, was born. Eleeta was active in 4-H programs with

her growing boys, and led a weekly outdoor cooking club on the farm. Her love of learning and pioneer spirit continued when, in the 1960s, she and Kenneth began an Italian purple plum orchard from seedlings, hard work and research. The orchard thrived, and they sold their plums to Gerber Baby Foods and local dryers.

Eleeta always maintained a large, flourishing garden, and learned to preserve this abundance through new canning methods being taught by the extension service. Her efforts as activist and journalist led to the manufacture of taller equipment necessary for safe canning practices. Along with her lifelong love of learning and sharing knowledge, Eleeta filled her days with music and Christian activities.

At various times throughout her life, she played the piano, accordion and autoharp, sang in the church choir and played the church organ. She claimed singing and playing spiritual songs helped shape her attitude about life, and that her Lord understood her heart when she played the beautiful hymns she loved so much.

Eleeta's grandfather had requested that she live her life to make the world a better place. With that done, she is at peace, and will live in the hearts of the many lives she touched. Eleeta was preceded in death by her husband, two brothers and one sister. She is survived by her five sons and their growing families. We will all miss her very much, and will carry her spirit with us forever.